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THE EDGE

The Voice of Integrity
at Fort Hays State University

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www.TheOnlineEdge.net

Students approve \$1.06 fee increase

Online voting arrives at FHSU
Zach Becker
Editor

No more paper cuts. Starting with next month's Student Government Association election, paper ballots will be a thing of the past at Fort Hays State. Instead, students will be casting their votes online through TigerTracks.

In order to access the system, students will need to add the elections channel to their TigerTracks homepage by selecting elections from the SEE 'ONLINE' ON PAGE 7

Zach Becker
Editor

Students approved a \$1.06 per credit hour student fee increase by a vote of 127 in favor and 47 opposed. Only 174 students turned out for the referendum, which is less than five percent of the roughly 4,200 on-campus students who could have voted.

"Yeah, I was kind of surprised that we didn't get a little bit higher voter turnout at least," said Drew Thomas, Student Government Association president. He thought that because the vote was held just before spring break, some students may have been distracted. "I was glad that we had the vote, even regardless of turnout."

Thomas spearheaded the effort to give students a right to vote on future fee increases that exceed \$1. That measure was approved by a special referendum in the fall.

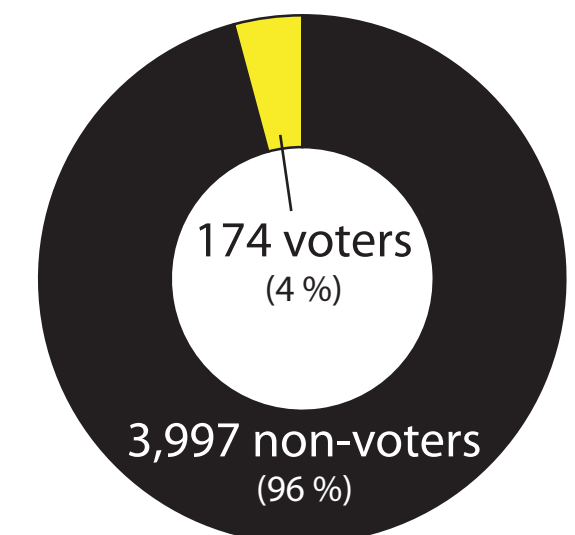
Student fee money is distributed each year to student organizations through the SGA allocations process.

"I guess people were either okay with the increase or just didn't feel they wanted to cast their vote on it," Thomas said.

SGA Fee Increase Referendum

127
yes

47
no



Total voter numbers based on Spring 2007 20th-day count

Professors discuss ideas about mobile computing

Mike Courson
Staff Writer

Mobile computing is coming next fall and Fort Hays State students can expect a major change in the classroom after its formal introduction.

Mobile computing is the use of computing devices to interact with a central information system, in this case using laptops or other electronic devices to access the wireless computing network on campus.

This technology allows students and teachers to do the things they do today – such as creating, accessing and storing information – all without being confined to a single location, such as a classroom.

In preparation for mobile computing, Fort Hays has undergone several changes. A wireless network has been installed so that faculty and students may access the system from anywhere on campus. Tablet computers, which

are in the most basic form an evolved form of the laptop, allow users to take notes in their own handwriting with a digital pen. These devices have been purchased for Fort Hays staff. Also, staff members and technical support people have been trained to smooth any problems that may occur when the system hits full operation in Fall 2007.

Supporters/Detractors

As with any major change, there are advocates and proponents to the system or to parts of the system. Many professors

support and welcome the new technology and feel it will benefit their teaching.

Shala Mills, chair of the Department of Political Science, has already experienced some of the benefits of mobile computing.

"Our faculty are already using mobile computing in several classes," she said. "In my legal research methods class last spring, for example, we used a laptop cart in the class. It was terrific to be able to meet in our regular classroom and still do online legal research exercises."

"...(mobile computing) is where learning and our society is going ... we want our students to have the opportunity to experience this in their study."

Liane Connelly,
Chair, Department of Nursing

"Instant messaging, email, inappropriate photos and other distractions are very powerful and can pull students away from the class."

Mark Bannister
Chair, Information Networking and Telecommunications

"Already I have some students with laptops in class and have appreciated it when, during a class discussion, they pull up appropriate material and offer it up for the class. For example, last semester I had a student who brought to the (Current Political Issues) class' attention a very important breaking news event. The timing was perfect and it wouldn't have been possible without the laptop in the room."

Mills anticipates a lot of advantages to mobile computing, including the ability to take quizzes on Blackboard during class. "I'm also looking forward to having the computers in class for typed essay exams in upper division courses," she said.

She added that typing will allow students to take down more information in less time since typing is often faster than writing. Computers will also allow students to easily edit content in an essay. The system will also be

advantageous to Mills in the grading process.

"It will allow me to use Safe Assignment to double check for plagiarism," she said. "And it will be much easier for me to read typed rather than hand-written exams."

Liane Connelly, chair of the Department of Nursing, also sees advantages for students.

"I believe mobile computing will help students in accessing material outside of class for the purpose of study and also during class to reinforce/enhance learning," she said. "While not in class; students can access powerpoint/audio streaming content while doing other things, which can serve to enhance their learning."

Implications

Mobile computing may have far reaching implications. Paul

SEE 'COMPUTING'
ON PAGE 7

EDITORIAL

Fort Hays should implement a convergent media plan

Last year, we wrote an editorial critical of the idea of Convergent Media Education at Fort Hays. It wasn't practical, we said. Upon further review, though, we believe it can be practical, although it will take some work and some major changes to current student media. Convergent Media Education looks to broaden student journalism by incorporating elements of print, radio, television and World Wide Web into a cohesive media learning environment. This should provide student journalists with an opportunity to enhance their abilities in many areas, while also creating a more appealing and engrossing experience for the end user; the readers/listeners/viewers. Paul Faber, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, spoke on behalf of a committee formed to examine that issue when he proposed it at a meeting last year. While the presentation itself was somewhat vague and perhaps not as professional as it should have been (Faber wore a T-shirt to the event, for goodness sakes), the underlying idea of media convergence is strong. For specifics, he suggested bringing *The University Leader* and *The Tiger's Tale* back into the academic curriculum as academic lab credits (both publications are currently housed in the office of Student Affairs), and he encouraged interaction between the *Leader*, *Tiger's Tale*, *Lines Literary Journal* and *KFHS TV* and Radio. However, no official word on the university's plans for the future of Convergent Media Edu-

cation has yet been announced. Well, it is high time to get a move on. If the recent Student Government Allocations process was any indication of the future, money is not coming any easier for student media. With a convergence plan, these once-separate student media could be combined into one larger, better funded, better staffed media organization. Resources, equipment and staff from the *Leader*, *Tiger's Tale*, *Lines* and *KFHS TV* and Radio could be put in one location, under the control of a one student editor, eliminating redundant news coverage between these organizations. These compounded resources would allow more comprehensive campus coverage and a multi-media approach to the news. Creating an integrated television, radio, print and online advertising scheme could also really boost funds. With this set up, a single journalist (or possibly teams of two) could cover an event for use in multiple media. Bringing the newspaper and magazine back into the academic curriculum could give student journalists the chance to learn from a small team of faculty advisers with experience in different media (although the student media would remain editorially independent). Obviously, not all student journalists can become experts in all fields, but they could get the chance to explore areas they normally wouldn't and broaden their horizons and their appeal to potential employers. Also, this foreword-thinking academic curriculum where journalism

is not confined to one medium could draw in many potential new students. And the end user would be getting a broader, more engrossing, informative, entertaining, interactive, multi-media presentation of campus news and opinions. Already, some aspects of this plan are in place. *KFHS TV* and Radio stream their programs online. The *Leader* has an online version of their print articles, along with forums and other user-feedback channels. But is this plan practical at a relatively small campus like Fort Hays? Well, *The Edge* has been conducting its own little experiment into convergent media and we are convinced it can be practical. Over the last couple of issues, we've began posting exclusive online streaming video and audio content. The fact we were able to do this with our extremely limited funds and staff shows it shouldn't be a stretch for other student media as well. And these online web-streaming features we unveiled were not separate ventures in themselves, but instead extensions of stories found in the newspaper, with reporting done simultaneously for both the print edition and the online feature. In any case, the convergent media genie is out of the bottle at Fort Hays. Now it is time for the university to commit to this innovative new approach to campus media. Bring it all into the classroom, give these future journalists an unmatched learning opportunity, and let the students-at-large enjoy the results this new integrated media will bring. -Zach Becker for The Editorial Board

Potholes, cracks should be fixed

While walking to the entrance of my dorm I was thinking about all the things I need to be doing; laundry, homework, my column for *The Edge*, etc. My concentration was broken by the sudden impact of the ground. It has become a habit of mine since I came to Fort Hays State to watch where I am walking for fear of falling, but I didn't notice the large crack in the asphalt near the McMinder hall door. I managed to step into and slip most of my right foot into the cursed crack that was about an inch deep. The black asphalt in the driveway has lots of little rocks that can painfully tear soft tissues; for instance, my right elbow. While falling is not the most painful accident, it sure ruined my lunch hour. Thankfully, some considerate college students helped me back up, and there was a very kind student at the front desk who bandaged up my elbow. From this experience I've learned two things. One, that there are still some kind indi-

viduals on campus. And two, always watch for potholes if you happen to be walking in the McMinder parking lot. But how many more students have to fall before the university actually gets around to fixing this problem. I'm not asking for a total repavement of the parking lot, just a little patching here and there. Taking a closer look, I've found lots of cracks and potholes around campus. I was lucky not to have broken something, but in the future we may have someone get seriously hurt. This would be a good time for campus leaders to take up the issue of fixing this safety hazard before the problem can get out of hand. There are quite a few people a lot more fragile than I am. Why risk a serious injury on a problem easily fixed? Rather than counting on their fellow students to help them up and patch up the wounds, how about just filling in those cracks and potholes.



Jeremy Scott Lovin Staff Writer

THE EDGE
www.TheOnlineEdge.net

Mission: *The Edge* newspaper staff strives to act as a voice of integrity on the campus of Fort Hays State University. *The Edge* endeavors to comprehensively cover important events and issues on campus and to approach every article with honesty, accuracy, integrity, fairness and public service in mind. Disclaimer: *The Edge* is a completely independent publication. *The Edge* is neither funded nor sponsored by Fort Hays State University. The views expressed herein reflect only the opinion of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of any person affiliated with the university.

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- Editor Zach Becker
- Photo Editor Brandon Worf
- Sports Editor Cole Reif
- Business Manager Jennifer Copp
- Staff Members Mike Courson Jeremy Scott Lovin Brandie Johnson

Online

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 The online election system was developed by Jackie Ruder of the CTC Helpdesk, who Thomas and Senator Cole Engel contacted about the project earlier this school year. The program was developed and integrated into TigerTracks at no additional cost to SGA or the university. Those intending to run for an SGA office, which includes the presidency and senate seats, have until Wednesday to apply, which can be done online or in the SGA offices in the lower level of the Memorial Union. Thomas said the form only takes several minutes to fill out and they have over 30 seats left to fill. He encourages those with interest to apply. Also, there will be a couple computers set up in the Union

where students can cast their vote. The online election system was developed by Jackie Ruder of the CTC Helpdesk, who Thomas and Senator Cole Engel contacted about the project earlier this school year. The program was developed and integrated into TigerTracks at no additional cost to SGA or the university. Those intending to run for an SGA office, which includes the presidency and senate seats, have until Wednesday to apply, which can be done online or in the SGA offices in the lower level of the Memorial Union. Thomas said the form only takes several minutes to fill out and they have over 30 seats left to fill. He encourages those with interest to apply.

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NEWS

Computing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 Faber, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and professor of philosophy, thinks the technology may change the classroom entirely. He says the computers will immediately help students with quick access to data, make student collaboration on projects easier, as well as allow subsequent display of projects on other screens or a whiteboard. The big change, however, may be the evolution from books to computers. "Eventually, I think, we will all have access to books, journals and other materials on the computer," Faber said. "So it will just be more convenient to have the one computer than to have many pounds of books. These books should also be cheaper in this format." Mark Bannister, chair of Information Networking and Telecommunications, said the new computers will allow students to take better notes and to participate in online quizzes and surveys in class. However, while he sees the advantages, he's also aware of the disadvantages. "Tablet computers can be distractions," Bannister said. "Instant messaging, email, inappropriate photos and other distractions are very powerful and can pull students away from the class. Dyknow and other tools may restrict some wondering and distraction, but faculty will have to develop new instructional techniques and students themselves will have to focus on learning." Dyknow is a software tool that instructors can use to see a small image of each student's computer screen at all times, while also providing the instructor some control over the student's computer, such as the ability to blank the screen or block out some computer functionality or software. It also is a tool that allows real-time collaborative note-taking. Mills has already experienced some of the negatives of mobile computing. "One of the concerns I am already experiencing is students surfing the net during class when I'd prefer they were listening to the lectures," she said. Connelly believes the system will serve more good than bad. "Honestly I do not see a lot of disadvantages," she said. "There of course is the time factor (for faculty) to prepare material in this manner and the cost factor for students; but this is where learning and our society is going. Therefore, we want our students to have the opportunity to experience this in their study at FHSU." Faber said in addition to carrying around a computer along with books in the early stages, costs could be a disadvantage. "Of course, we are always trying to balance additional cost against the educational value of an experience or a resource," he said. "For example, a foreign travel or service experience would no doubt add value to the education of every single FHSU student. But we do not want to require that because of the cost of the travel." Mobile computing should open up a whole array of new teaching strategies and techniques for professors to utilize. "I look forward to seeing more use of interactive tools in the classroom. Dyknow is an exciting

ing tool to help students engage in the class and also to assess understanding of course material," Connelly said. Costs The cost of change is an important factor in its success. Many professors feel cost will not be a significant issue for future students. "I see this the cost factor as an issue to overcome early on as this innovation is adopted on campus, but less of an issue later," Connelly said. Bannister paints an even brighter picture. "I have been able to allow students to use free online resources for one of my classes which saved students approximately \$150 in text book purchases," he said. Faber has high hopes for the new system, but notes that comparing text books is easier than comparing mobile learning technology because you can actually see the textbooks. "My own prediction is that there will be many more out of the classroom learning experiences with the mobile learning technology, but we don't know now exactly what will develop," he said. "I personally, however, expect that we will see developing more and more a culture of exploration and learning, a culture that breaks down some of the borders between being in class and being out of class. Though some changes are already in effect in some departments, the initiative will be campus wide in the Fall 2007 semester. Tablet computers will be required for all new students. Returning students will not have to purchase the computers but are encouraged to do so. members of the committee," Van Horn said. "And I will read every single survey and write comments and address the members of the Campus Food Committee when we make our decision about the food service in the years to come." The Campus Food Committee works closely with Nick Guatta, Chartwells Campus Food Service Director. "(Guatta) always seemed open to working with us and addressing all of the student issues," said SGA President Drew Thomas. "He's taken under consideration everything we said - told us what he can do, what he can't do under current budget." Although the survey will be directly distributed to some classes, it will be available to all students. It will be posted online and hard copies can be picked up at the SGA offices in the lower level of Memorial Union and in the residence halls.

Survey looks at campus food

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Sports in Brief

Baseball
The Tiger baseball team might not have the fondest feelings for Maryville, Mo.
Fort Hays State dropped three of the four games there this past weekend against Northwest Missouri State.
The Tigers began the series nicely with a win in the opening game, 5-1.
After that, Fort Hays would surrender the next three games to the Bearcats 4-2, 8-2, and 8-4.
The Tigers fell behind early in each of the three losses and could not manage to rally back late in the games.
The three straight losses leave Fort Hays with a 16-9 record on season with a 4-4 conference mark.
The Tigers will try to get back to their winning ways as they travel to the state’s capital to take on the Ichabods from Washburn University today.

Softball
Spring break.
Most students in college use this mid-semester break for a chance to take a trip to the beach, go skiing or simply relax.
The Fort Hays State softball team received none of those options as they have been racking in miles on the bus for an entire week of road games.
On the final day of classes before the break, the softball team headed to Emporia for a doubleheader with Bemidji State.
The Tigers swept the series with Bemidji and stuck around in Emporia for the ESU Tournament.
They played five games over the next two days, winning two and dropping three.
The Lady Tigers actually got last Monday off for just enough time to travel west to Denver

The doubleheader gets underway at 2 p.m.
The trip to Colorado would continue to be unpleasant for Tigers head coach, Tonja Hadley, and her squad as they faltered in a two-game series with Colorado Mines last Thursday.
The Tigers fell in both of these games, 5-4 and 10-1.
The 4-9 spring break record drops Fort Hays State to 9-21 overall.
The Tigers will now get a break before taking the field again this Friday as they play host to Missouri Southern.
The Tigers opening game in MIAA conference play starts at 1 p.m., with game two immediately following.

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Republicans have abandoned their ideology

Things change over time, and they can seem extremely drastic, or extremely slow. It’s one of those things where you never know, but when you do, sometimes it just doesn’t make sense.
Take politics, for instance. Twenty years ago, Ronald Reagan was in office, and Reaganomics were in full effect. George Bush was looking at his first election, and the recession of the 80s was finally lifting. The crux of the Republican party was simply: less government, less intrusion, more laissez faire attitudes.
Cut taxes (except Bush would do the opposite later despite the attitude), reduce government waste, less money going to social programs, etc. It was the typical conservative attitude.
Flash forward twenty years later, and the Republican Party is in shambles. Granted, I don’t support it (not anymore, my disillusionment is over), but they’ve gone completely backwards of their basic ideology, which is “less is more.”
Take, for example, the Patriot Act. While this was in the works prior to 9/11, the attacks gave it the shove it “needed” to get through (despite the fact that much of it is realistically unconstitutional), giving the FBI, CIA, and “Homeland Security” (the biggest joke of bureaucracy there is) sweeping and almost limitless powers of search, seizure, detention, and “law en-

forcement”; if you ask me, it sounds like pretext to a police state. I digress. Then there are the restrictions on air travel and travel by train and bus. Don’t forget the Military Commission Act, which effectively legalized torture, not just on military combatants, but on civilians too.
As for the Freedom of Information Act, it’s hardly existent in this post-9/11 euphoria. Laws regarding wiretapping and eavesdropping are essentially useless, since Bush considers himself “above the law” and therefore renders them not applicable (though this is entirely illegal, and everyone knows it).
So what does this all mean? Well, to put it bluntly, something’s up. You don’t just see a party like the Republicans make a major shift in their basic tenets and doctrines in less than twenty years.
While they’re still up to their usual business of not caring for the poor and socially distraught, such as denying funding to AIDS-fighting organizations like DKT International (simply because they won’t “condemn” the practice of prostitution and sex trafficking in certain countries despite providing free condoms and medical examinations to women in such locales), they’re beginning to violate their own rules of being the champions for less government intrusion. At least, that’s what it looks like.
One can’t forget about their crusade to

Brandon Worf
Staff Writer

have Christianity dominate the country, despite the Supreme Court continually upholding the legal separation of church and state.
Granted, the Republican party is all about free business and less taxes, provided they can get away with it. But it seems that with the terrorism bandwagon installed, they’re all about more security, more privacy invasions and less liberty than is already present—more illegal searches, more illegal eavesdropping, wiretapping, surveillance, and more Big Brother tactics. If you don’t believe in the possibility of a police state, you should. It’s entirely too real, and it’s on your front doorstep—just look for the surveillance cameras in public next time you’re out.
On top of all this, since 9/11 the Bush Administration and its contingency of Republican overlords have adopted a bully-style ideology, touting the highly arrogant and (dare I say) jingoistic phrase of, “You’re either with us, or you’re with the

terrorists.”
When translated it means, “You can’t have any opinion except for ours.” I can just feel everyone over in the John Kerry camp (and even in Al Gore’s group) wondering what might have been if they’d have stood up to such moronic and insipid ridicule coming from someone who has ominous ties to the Bin Laden family since the 1980s (if you think I’m lying, go look it up Arbusto Energy, Spectrum 7, and/or Harken Energy).
Again, I’m on another rant.
Granted, it’s not that the Republicans have “strayed” from the beaten path already; that was a given a long time ago when they claimed that marriage was a sacred act reserved for a man and women. Last I’d heard, over 65 percent of marriages between men and women *fail*, either ending in divorce, or annulment; that sounds more like a sacrilege than a sacred act.
Realistically, I think the GOP is asking for multiple options on how the Democrats will deliver the Republicans’ comeuppance, when it’s obvious that there will be plenty of things to consider.
We’ve already got the Congressional majority, all we need is for a presidential nominee on the liberal side to restore dignity to the executive branch (and credibility), and maybe some of our civil liberties. I can at least hope for that much.

Concert season right around the corner

Spring has only just begun, and I’m already anticipating the summer. Though the heat gets a little more intolerable each year, there is one thing I’ve found in the past few years to make it all worthwhile: concerts.
Ever the music fan, I still had not attended any real concerts until my senior year in high school. That summer, at our county fair, I watched Sherrie Austin open up for Keith Urban on what was promoted as “A Night Down Under.”
Both artists hail from Australia. But the artists were fairly new at the time, but hearing the couple songs I knew made it worth the money paid. I was hooked.
Now, I anticipate every summer largely because of the concerts around the state. Sure, Wichita has big names weekly. Sandstone does the same. But most of the time, you wind up paying big bucks for bad seats. Once you’ve leaned against the stage while you watched and listened, seats in the back just don’t cut it. I will give credit to The Cotillion in Wichita. It’s a roundhouse-type bar with general admission, so you

Mike Courson
Staff Writer

can get close. I’ve had a great time watching Hinder, Pat Green, and Kenny Wayne Shepherd there. Did you know that FHSU Alum Mark Selby wrote Shepherd’s smash rock hit “Blue on Black?”
And Selby is married to Tia Sillers, writer of LeAnn Womack’s huge ballad “I hope you Dance.” I met her and watched him at Beech Schmidt a few years ago.
By now, I’ve seen most major country acts and a good variety of other performers. Though 3 Doors Down at River Fest in Wichita may be my favorite concert so far, my favorite venue is the county fair.
Generally, the fair offers the cheapest tickets, and since they are general admis-

sion, early goers can get great seats. The trick can be finding the good performers. Ellis, Barton, Trego, and Rooks counties generally have the biggest names. Little Texas and Foghat are playing in Great Bend this summer. Last year, fair goers could see Sawyer Brown in Stockton or Little Big Town in Hays.
My second favorite place for concerts is the Wild West Festival. I’ve seen a lot of sponsored events, and I’m usually annoyed as someone runs down the sponsor list. However, the Hays folks truly deserve the extra attention. Three great nights of music for one very low price.
To top it off, you can rent a plastic chair for one dollar and sit in the middle of a park, in the middle of summer, and not get one mosquito bite.
One of my favorites thus far at WWF was Phil Vassar a couple years ago. A thunderstorm drove away most spectators, but Phil stayed on and played unplugged while a few hundred fans huddled next to the stage in the rain. Almost as good, last year,

the man sitting next to me offered me some of his gator on a stick. I didn’t take it, but I always meet great people there.
Other places to watch are bars. Obviously, a small space means your seat is automatically going to be good. Furthermore, you have a decent chance at meeting the artists. I was unknowingly standing next to Cross Canadian Ragweed’s front man, Cody Canada, at a Manhattan bar.
When I finally noticed, I talked to him and got a picture with him. Then they played and it was great to watch from essentially on the stage. I had to see them again two years ago at the Ellis County Fair.
Summertime is music time, and music fans should hit as many concerts as possible.
It’s a good excuse for a road trip, you get to meet all kinds of people, and you get to see these artists in the flesh.
You could hit Stampede and see them all at once from a hundred yards out, but if you’re a true fan of music, I suggest getting a little closer at a county fair.

VIC HENLEY

A former VH-1 veejay with amazing improvisational ability!
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A "good ol' boy" with high energy!
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CHARMS AUDIENCES WITH HIS HOME-SPUN HUMOR...



Wednesday, April 14, 2007
7:30 p.m.
Cody Commons



Over spring break, a sizable number of Fort Hays State students took mini-vacations to locales near and far. In upper left corner, Charlie Foley, Jillian VanCampen, Hayley Ranker and Brittany Cowles pose in front of a palm tree in Panama City Beach, Fla. At upper right, Julie Martinez stands next to a sign in Texas. At lower right, Amanda Schenk poses wearing a sombrero with a local girl in South Padre Island, Texas. In middle picture, VanCampen looks out her hotel window in Panama City Beach. In lowermost picture, Sharista Owen and Audrey Bain pose on the beach at South Padre Island.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Great Bend offers budget road-trip opportunity

Mike Courson
Staff Writer

Looking for a road trip on a budget? Consider a trip to Great Bend, just an hour southeast of Hays. The town is a host to a myriad of unique attractions, including a zoo, several parks, a municipal water park and the world-famous Cheyenne Bottoms wetlands.

The Great Bend zoo, which offers free admission, is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. The zoo and park is a must stop for the animal and nature lover.

Besides 60 species of animals, the park also features a play area for children, horseshoe pits and several shelter houses for picnics. For reptile fans, the alligators are about to make their appearance.

"The big alligators come out April 21st - the 700-800 pound ones," said Mike Cargill, Great Bend director of parks. "The smaller ones may come out before that."

In the summer, visitors can cool off at The Wetlands at Great Bend Aquatic Facility, located in Brit Spough Park.

The pool features eight slides, spray features, a new bathhouse and a huge bucket of water that dumps hundreds of gallons of cool water on unsuspecting patrons in line for the big slide. The pool is open from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m., seven days a week.

Great Bend is the home of two lakes. Fisherman can try their luck at the 43 acre Stone Lake or 12 acre Veterans Lake. Vets Lake is part of Veterans Memorial Park, a large park with several baseball and softball diamonds, tennis courts, an exercise trail and a play area complete with new equipment for kids. The park also has several shelter houses.

A unique find in central Kansas are sandy beaches and palm trees. Visitors can find both at Pedal Play in Veteran's Park. Located directly next to the lake, Pedal Play offers rentals on pedal boats, kayaks, bicycles, golf discs and volleyballs. Take a two-seater out for a unique date after dark, or make a party of it with a four-seat pedal boat for just a few dollars more. Pedal Play opens in May with hours of 1 to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 1 to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday. Visit their website at pedalplay.net

For the nature lover, Cheyenne Bottoms is a 41,000 acre expanse of wetland and prairie six miles northeast of Great Bend. It is estimated that nearly half of all North American shorebirds stop at the Bottoms during migration. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded at the refuge. Besides birds, the Bottoms is home to deer, raccoons, minks and a host of reptile and amphibians species. If animals are not your thing, the Bottoms also offers several hiking trails. Soon, Cheyenne Bottoms will be home to the new \$4.5 million Kansas Wetlands Education Center (in a partnership with Fort Hays State). Karl Grover, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, said the Wetlands Center is expected to be complete by early 2008. He added that Great Bend is holding a bird festival April 27-29. The festival will principally consist of bird watching tours.

History buffs can visit the Barton County Historical Society located just south of the Arkansas River on Highway 281. The museum offers a collection of old dolls, war artifacts and several displays that offer a look into the past. Outside, visitors can walk through a one-room schoolhouse, church and post-office building built in 1871. The museum is open mid-April to mid-November, 10



MIKE COURSON/THE EDGE
A young boy takes a moment to scope out a bear at Brit Spough Zoo in Great Bend. At right, the Wetlands of Great Bend Aquatic Facility is prepared for another summer of use.

a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 1 to 5 p.m. on the weekends. There is a \$2 admission.

The Expo complex a few miles west of Great Bend plays home to several events. The Spring Expo showcases local businesses in one setting. The 31 show, an international event featuring farm implements, is held in Great Bend every three years. In July, visitors can watch one of the biggest fireworks shows in central Kansas. Also in July is the Barton County fair, complete with carnival, livestock, and music. Past musicians to perform at the fair include Kenny Chesney, Gary Allan, Keith Urban and Rascal Flatts.

This year, Little Texas and Foghat are scheduled to play.

Undoubtedly, you will have worked up a hunger during your trip around town. Besides the usual variety of fast-food chain restaurants, visitors can also enjoy locally owned specialty businesses. For Mexican food, try Playa Azul on west 10th, Delgado's at 10th and Stone or Kiowa Kitchen on east 10th, just outside the Great Bend city limits. All three offer a wide variety of authentic Mexican dishes. The Classic Inn on south Patton offers Chinese and American cuisines, but is a little pricier than the others. "It may be the best restaurant in



town," says Dustin Burgardt, "but it's definitely the best Chinese." The local bars also offer a change from the usual. Home Field Bar & Grill, 2017 Forest, claims it's the home of "the coldest beer and the best cheeseburgers." They offer a variety of beverages and hamburgers, as well as onion rings, fish, shrimp, and even cauliflower. Billiard fans can enjoy a meal at The Rack on Washington Avenue. Besides pool, patrons there can enjoy a variety of American and Mexican foods.

Just 60 miles from Hays, Great Bend is the ideal spot for a one-day trip. Whether it's a trip to the zoo in the spring, a dazzling fireworks display on July 4, some ice fishing in December or just an excuse to get away for a day, Great Bend has plenty of ways to make you want to come back.

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